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ABSTRACT

This paper looks at meeting Colorado student expectations of higher education by looking at demographic trends within Colorado's current undergraduate student population and some of the factors that may influence future student needs. Section I looks at the state's student population and notes that, though nationally 33 percent of undergraduates are traditional students, in Colorado 52 percent are still traditional with only rural areas of the state experiencing an increase in nontraditional students and a decrease in traditional student populations. This rural population has influenced a statewide shift toward more nontraditional students. Among racial and ethnic groups the Hispanic and White student populations increased while the Black, Native American, and Asian representation in the total student population remained relatively constant. An increase in the number of women in undergraduate study came primarily among nontraditional students in urban and rural areas. The largest increase in part-time students occurred among the traditional age rural population. Also the state population as a whole is expected to increase by nearly 10 percent by 2001. Implications of these trends are that the state must adjust the provision of educational opportunities to be more responsive to the needs of the student population. A conclusion notes some specific programs and initiatives that have already been successful. (JB)

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COLORADO COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION MASTER PLAN BACKGROUND PAPER:

What Must Postsecondary Education Provide to Meet Individual Student Expectations?

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WHAT MUST POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION PROVIDE TO MEET INDIVIDUAL STUDENT EXPECTATIONS?

INTRODUCTION

Recent CCHE public hearings suggest that Colorado's citizens want more opportunities for higher education (at all levels, at various locations, in rural and urban communities, in diverse fields) and want higher education to be conveniently offered (classes available at various times and in nearby locations). One approach to answering the question, "what must postsecondary education provide to meet individual student expectations?," is to review the demographic trends within Colorado's current student population and some of the factors that may influence future student needs. That is the intent of this paper. Factors such as demographics, economics, and student choices based on convenience will inevitably influence educational decision making. This paper assumes that students' educational choices frequently result from needs.

The Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education (WICHE) has called on higher education to "wake up to its new clientele." WICHE wants to remind everyone that today's college students are often different from the more familiar image of the past. Today's typical college student is not the student of the 1960s or 1970s, or even the 1980s. Rather, they are "life-long learners, place-bound students, part-time students, working adults, re-entry adults, individuals in rural communities, and members of underrepresented racial and ethnic groups." The new majority of students are older, more diverse, more experienced, more likely to attend classes part-time than full-time, and more likely to combine work and school. Eager to offset the effects of a shrinking pool of eighteen-year-olds, the nation's colleges and universities have been willing to enroll new majority students but slow to recognize their needs.

A Time Magazine article (April 13, 1992), describes the needs of today's students as: often working, needing to be able to compete, and wanting a flexible format. Because of practical constraints - child care, jobs, commutes - they cannot go (or prefer not to go) to campus. Many older students are taking courses to change careers, and retired seniors return to campus to satisfy their curiosity about everything from art history to zoology. Institutions must adapt to an increasingly diverse student population, which includes not just more women and minorities, but older students and part-timers with special needs.

Employment concerns are genuine considerations for students making educational choices. It is necessary to consider the demands of the work place in assessing the needs of employees to compete and advance in the labor force. Institutions of higher education must also consider other motivations for attending school, e.g., students' goals, expectations, and dreams, as well as the "convenience" issues. The present economic situation challenges higher education to serve as a fulcrum that balances the goals of providing convenience and meeting vital needs.

A snapshot of Colorado's existing higher education network for students will help anticipate the evolution of that network into the 21st century. A realistic sense of this movement is critically important in the master planning process. Although the focus of this paper is on

the undergraduate student population, this should not be misinterpreted as a signal that graduate and professional education are unimportant. Rather, the paper establishes a starting point for addressing the individual needs of all students.

I. COLORADO'S CHANGING STUDENT POPULATION

This analysis restricts itself to undergraduate students. A traditional student is a person 24 years old or younger; a non-traditional student is 25 years or older. The majority of Colorado's student population is still in the traditional category (52.5% in 1992). This contrasts with the national profile described below. The Colorado data presented in this paper derive from CCHE's Student Unit Record Data System (SURDS). The "urban" designation refers to the ten Front Range counties: Larimer, Weld, Boulder, Adams, Jefferson, Denver, Arapahoe, Douglas, El Paso, and Pueblo. All other counties are grouped under the "rural" heading. Student data since Fiscal Year 1987 (the first year of SURDS) are presented in either the traditional or nontraditional age group categories. The tables display separate categories for the urban and rural sectors of Colorado's student population. Gender, ethnicity, and full/part time status are also given.

PROFILE OF TODAY'S STUDENT

NATIONALLY

In 1990-91, 33% of the undergraduate student population were traditional students, and 66% were nontraditional. Two-fifths of all students are part-timers, and more than a third are over 25.

The typical traditional student is 20 years old, dependent, a high school graduate, female (53%), white (only 18% are minority), single.

The typical nontraditional undergraduate student is white (25% are minority), female (57%), high school graduate, taking courses on a credit hour basis, average age of 29, attends school only part time, financially independent of her parents, lives off campus.

COLORADO

In 1990-91, 52.1% of the undergraduate population were traditional students, and 47.9% were nontraditional. 40% (two-fifths) of all Colorado undergraduates are part-time, and 30% are over 25 years old.

The typical undergraduate student is white (only 16.3% are minority), female (53.7%), of traditional age (18-24), and attends school full time.

Colorado's urban areas experienced little change in either their traditional or nontraditional student population between FY87 and FY92 (Table 1). Rural areas had an increase in nontraditional students and a corresponding decrease in their traditional student populations. The traditional student population decreased statewide (from 54.2% to 52.5%) and nontraditional students increased (from 45.8% to 47.5%) during the same period. The rural population has had the greatest influence on the statewide shift toward more nontraditional students.

Table 1

PERCENTAGE OF UNDERGRADUATES: TRADITIONAL/NONTRADITIONAL AND URBAN/RURAL

	TRADITIONAL	NONTRADITIONAL
URBAN		
FY		
87	56.0	44.0
88	56.6	43.4
89	55.1	44.9
90	54.0	46.0
91	54.4	45.6
92	55.1	44.9
RURAL		
87	46.0	54.0
88	42.8	57.2
89	44.8	55.2
90	44.8	55.2
91	42.8	57.2
92	41.6	58.4
TOTAL		
87	54.2	45.8
88	53.8	46.2
89	53.1	46.9
90	52.1	47.9
91	52.1	47.9
92	52.5	47.5

Source: CCHE data

Statewide, the Hispanic and white student populations increased from 6% to 8.8% and from 78.4% to 80% respectively. Black, Native American, and Asian student representation in the total student population remained relatively constant. Changes in the diversity of Colorado's student population between FY87 and FY92 show that Hispanic representation increased among traditional and nontraditional students in both the urban and rural areas (Table 2). Traditional white students increased their percentage of statewide total enrollment in both urban and rural areas of the state. Black student representation increased in the nontraditional urban sector of the student population. Native American students were better represented in the traditional age group and among the rural population. Asian student enrollment reflected a more urban, traditional profile.

Table 2

PERCENTAGE OF UNDERGRADUATES BY ETHNICITY

FY	UNK	NRA	BLACK	NAT AMER	ASIAN	HISP	WHITE	TOTAL
TRADITIONAL								
URBAN								
87	5.3	1.7	2.3	.5	3.0	5.6	81.6	64,797
88	5.1	1.7	2.3	.5	3.1	5.8	81.5	67,454
89	4.6	1.5	2.4	.6	3.1	6.5	81.4	69.854
90	4.3	1.3	2.6	.7	3.2	7.0	80.9	73,477
91	2.8	1.4	2.8	.7	3.4	7.9	81.0	77,857
92	2.5	1.4	2.9	.8	3.7	8.6	80.0	80,825
RURAL								
87	4.0	1.5	1.7	2.4	.7	8.7	81.0	11,531
88	3.4	1.2	1.7	2.3	.7	8.6	82.1	13,084
89	3.8	1.6	1.7	2.4	.6	8.3	81.6	13,640
90	2.8	1.7	1.5	2.1	.6	8.4	82.8	14,562
91	2.2	2.4	1.6	2.5	.7	9.2	81.4	15,128
92	2.4	1.8	1.7	2.7	.8	10.1	80.5	15,261
NONTRADITIONAL								
URBAN								
87	11.7	1.9	3.3	.9	2.2	6.0	74.1	44,226
88	11.8	1.3	3.4	.8	2.0	6.5	74.2	44,404
89	8.8	1.0	3.2	.8	1.9	7.6	76.7	48,742
90	8.2	.6	3.7	1.0	2.1	7.9	76.4	54,608
91	5.9	.7	3.9	1.1	2.1	8.6	77.7	56,569
92	5.1	.6	4.1	1.2	2.2	8.9	77.9	57,610
RURAL								
87	16.7	1.4	.4	.9	.3	5.4	74.9	12,279
88	12.1	.1	.2	1.0	.4	7.3	79.0	15,792
89	11.7	1.4	.3	1.2	.3	7.1	77.9	14,773
90	6.5	1.5	.3	1.2	.3	6.8	83.3	15,851
91	3.2	.9	.6	1.3	.4	6.9	86.7	16,841
92	3.5	.4	.5	1.3	.4	7.9	86.0	17,696
STATE TOTAL								
8	8.4	1.7	2.4	.8	2.3	6.0	78.4	132,833
88	7.9	1.3	2.4	.8	2.2	6.5	78.9	140,734
89	6.6	1.3	2.4	.9	2.2	7.1	79.5	147,009
90	5.7	1.1	2.7	1.0	2.3	7.4	79.8	158,498
91	3.9	1.2	2.8	1.1	2.4	8.2	80.5	166,395
92	3.5	1.1	3.0	1.1	2.6	8.8	80.0	171,392

(UNK = Unknown, NRA = Non registered alien)
Source: CCHE data

Women students increased in the state from 51.8% in FY87 to 54% in FY92 (Table 3). Traditional women students in urban areas decreased slightly, from 55.8% to 54.3% of the student population, during the same period. In rural areas, the traditional female student population decreased, but the nontraditional female student population increased in both

urban and rural areas. The growth among women, as a percentage of total student enrollment, came primarily among nontraditional students in urban and rural areas.

Table 3

FEMALE UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

FY	TRADITIONAL		NONTRADITIONAL		TOTAL FEMALE	PERCENT
87	36,720	53.4	32,104	46.6	68,824	51.8
88	39,427	52.5	35,728	47.5	75,155	53.4
89	41,285	52.1	38,024	47.9	79,309	53.9
90	43,574	51.2	41,598	48.8	85,172	53.7
91	45,823	51.2	43,611	48.8	89,434	53.7
92	47,603	51.5	44,897	48.5	92,500	54.0

FEMALE UNDERGRADUATES: TRADITIONAL/NONTRADITIONAL AND URBAN/RURAL

FY	TRADITIONAL	NONTRADITIONAL
URBAN		
87	55.8	44.2
88	56.1	43.9
89	54.6	45.4
90	53.6	46.4
91	53.9	46.1
92	54.3	45.7
RURAL		
87	42.4	57.6
88	38.6	61.4
89	41.4	58.5
90	40.9	59.1
91	40.3	59.7
92	39.8	60.2

Source: CCHE data

It is also instructive to consider changes in the percentage of enrollments of full time vs. part time students (see Table 4). Full time student enrollment increased among traditional and nontraditional student in rural as well as urban areas between FY87 and FY92. Traditional and nontraditional part time student enrollment increased in rural and urban areas during that period. The largest increase in part time students occurred among the traditional age rural population. Full time students decreased from 58.5% to 55.9% of the total statewide population during the six years under study.

Table 4

PERCENTAGE FULL/PART TIME UNDERGRADUATES BY TRADITIONAL/NONTRADITIONAL AND URBAN/RURAL

FY	TRADITIONAL		NONTRADITIONAL		
	Full	Part	Full	Part	% Full-Time
URBAN					
87	80.1	19.9	31.9	68.9	60.2
88	80.4	19.6	32.1	67.9	61.2
89	80.9	19.1	31.9	68.1	60.8
90	79.7	20.3	30.2	69.8	58.6
91	78.9	21.1	30.0	70.0	58.3
92	77.8	22.2	30.4	69.6	58.1
RURAL					
87	82.7	17.3	23.3	76.7	52.0
88	81.7	18.3	18.8	81.2	47.3
89	81.1	18.9	21.5	78.5	50.1
90	80.8	19.2	21.7	78.3	50.0
91	77.3	22.7	20.8	79.2	47.5
92	77.5	22.5	20.1	79.9	46.7
TOTAL					
87	80.5	19.5	29.4	70.6	58.8
88	80.6	19.4	28.6	71.4	58.4
89	80.9	19.1	29.5	70.5	58.7
90	79.8	20.2	28.3	71.7	56.9
91	78.6	21.4	27.9	72.1	56.2
92	77.8	22.2	28.0	72.0	55.9

Source: CCHE data

State and national demographic trends will markedly affect higher education. For example, the traditional high school cohort of students (ages 14 to 17) is projected to decline through 1995 and then increase through the end of the century, rising from 15 million in 1990 to 15.3 million in the year 2000.

The traditional college age and entry level worker population (18 to 24 years old) will slowly decline from 27 million in 1988 to 24 million in 1995 and remain at that level through the year 2000. Between 1990 and 2000 the population aged 18 to 24 years will fall by 3 percent. It will rise again slowly through 2005.

The Colorado state population is expected to increase by nearly 10% from 1991 to 2001, from 3.3 million to over 3.7 million. The segment of the population ages 15 to 19 will gradually increase through 2001 and the 20 to 24 year old cohort will grow in a similar fashion. The state population of 25 to 29 year olds will decrease until 1997 but increase after that until 2001. Thirty to 39 year olds will decrease in Colorado through 2001 but 40 to 54 year olds will increase sharply.

Table 5

SUMMARY OF NATIONAL AND COLORADO POPULATION PROJECTIONS

AGE GROUP	NATIONAL POPULATION 1990-1995	NATIONAL POPULATION 1995-2000	AGE GROUP	COLORADO POPULATION 1991-2001
14-17	decline	**increase**	15-19	**increase**
18-24	decline	steady	20-24	**increase**
25-34	decline	decline	25-29	decline
			30-39	decline
35-54	**increase**	**increase**	40-54	**increase**
55-64	decline	**increase**	55 +	**increase**
65-74	steady	decline		

II. IMPLICATIONS FOR COLORADO HIGHER EDUCATION

CCHE's "Demographic Projections" paper groups population segments by age and calculates the percentage of students in each population group who are in the student population. The resulting "participation rate" was calculated by age group and urban/rural regions. The following is a reproduction of that study (except for the final column which has been added as part of this paper).

Table 6

Participation Rates by Age Group and Region for All In-State Headcount Enrollment

	AGE	1986	1987	1988	1987	1990	1991	+/- 1%
URBAN	15-19	12.818	14.279	14.734	16.192	14.364	13.672	
	20-24	12.020	12.807	13.285	14.506	17.338	17.775	2210
	25-29	5.798	6.638	6.093	6.704	7.475	7.914	2150
	30-39	5.664	6.264	5.952	6.121	6.379	6.676	1980
	40-54	3.162	3.906	3.716	4.166	4.320	4.499	4670
	55 +	.704	1.036	.923	.946	.952	1.068	7106
								570
RURAL	15-19	10.319	10.968	11.860	12.488	12.779	12.533	
	20-24	14.879	15.550	16.889	18.869	20.775	22.882	460
	25-29	6.959	7.035	7.667	8.442	8.040	8.389	440
	30-39	4.626	4.638	4.897	5.289	5.540	5.525	430
	40-54	2.269	2.392	2.661	2.961	3.115	3.128	830
	55 +	.478	.489	.513	.597	.619	.603	1480
								1390

Source: CCHE data

The last column in the above table shows the affect on student enrollment of a 1% increase in the 1991 participation rates. A 1% increase in all age groups would mean 23,716 students in addition to the 37,000 already projected. So, instead of a 22.2% increase, it would be a 36.6% increase (60,716 students).

The implications of the population projections for Colorado higher education may be seen by comparing the projections with the participation rates. CCHE predicts that overall, public, in-state headcount enrollment is likely to increase by 22.2% between fall 1991 and fall 2001, from about 166,000 to about 203,000, an increase of 37,000 students. This assumes that the above participation rates for 1991 remain constant until 2001 - a situation which has not occurred between 1986 and 1991, and if the Colorado population "shifts" as projected, may startlingly increase initial headcount 2001 projections.

Demographic information suggests that the urban population will grow by 14% by the year 2001, compared to only a 5.5% increase in the rural counties. The population projections by age group suggest a growth in the 40 to 54 year old group. A population increase in this group of only 1% would produce 7106 plus 4670 (11,776) additional students.

III. BUILDING UPON PROVEN SUCCESS

The challenge for higher education will be to meet the needs of this changing population. The changing educational needs of Colorado's population are driven by several factors. Demographic changes affect the nature of the student population. The distribution of the student population is changing with respect to age, urban or rural environment, race or ethnicity, and gender. The educational needs of the student population are changing due to economic trends. The shift from a manufacturing to a service economy has affected employers' expectations and redefined student needs. An emphasis on work place learning shows the constant need for employees to retool or retrain. It makes sense for higher education to adjust appropriately to meet the demands of a changing student population.

Colorado's public institutions of higher education currently provide a broad range of educational opportunities. Institutional roles and mission statements charge colleges and universities to provide quality undergraduate education, entry level work force preparation, graduate and professional training, and to promote research of the highest order. Thus, the challenge for higher education in Colorado is not to provide a variety of educational opportunities - that is already being done - as much as it is to adjust the provision of educational opportunities in a manner that is more responsive to the needs or demands of a changing student population.

Colorado's public colleges and universities are capable of responding to this challenge. An appropriate response requires their collective understanding of the nature of shifting educational needs and their agreement on a statewide reaction. This means that institutions will come to reflect what many individuals already understand, i.e., that participation rates are changing by age group and region; that economic needs drive the popular demand for higher education; and that the resource base for the provision of higher education is becoming increasingly more constrained.

The dynamics that fuel individual student expectations may also create tension within that institutions that have to meet new demands. As the economy on both the state and national levels becomes more service oriented so must institutions of higher education. It requires an adjustment of institutional priorities and orientations to move from a situation where students bear the burden of adaptation to meet the expectations of the colleges or universities they attend to one in which institutions of higher education increasingly refine their role as one of fulfilling student expectations. Public colleges and universities in Colorado can accomplish this shift, but the sort of change that is required is not an easy adjustment to make.

Colorado has already established strategies for meeting the changing educational needs of students. The following are examples of some initiatives that have proven successful:

- CCHE has administered Off-Campus State-Funded Programs since 1990 when the Commission determined that more opportunities to complete degree programs (or certification or endorsement area programs) were necessary, particularly in rural areas of the state. The largest amount of FTE was designated for rural programs for both FY 91 and 92 programs (500 vs 375 for urban programs).

- The Colorado Statewide Extended Studies Program is the state's main vehicle for the delivery of off-campus instruction and continuing education. All public four-year institutions participate. The program was established under Commission direction in 1972 in order to check duplication of effort and to encourage greater off-campus programming in rural areas. In 1989-90 more than 110,000 student enrollments were recorded in 8,300 courses and more than 4,100 individuals enrolled in correspondence courses. An additional 13,000 continuing education students enrolled in classes on-campus on a space-available basis. The program is fully self-supporting, receiving no financial support from the General Fund or any other tax source. The Extended Studies Program delivers instruction in the following ways: (1) classroom instruction at a variety of sites throughout the state; (2) independent study (correspondence); and (3) telecommunications.

- Basic Skills delivery systems recognize the need for programs and classes to be offered in rural areas and in locations distant from any campus. Delivery systems include: a) K-12, b) Area Vocational Schools - communication (reading, writing, verbal); mathematics, and study skills, c) Community Colleges - reading, writing, math and study skills, d) Extended Studies -the Extended Studies program is the state's vehicle for the delivery of off-campus instruction and continuing education by four year colleges and universities. Instruction is available through i) correspondence, ii) telecommunications, and iii) classes offered at off campus sites, including schools, business, and military bases, e) Volunteer Organizations, and f) Employers.

An emphasis on serving the rural community has been the main driving force for the establishment of the programs and services outlined above. Current trends suggest that Colorado's colleges and universities will have to adapt further if they are to satisfy emerging student needs for higher education. Existing precedents provide a good signal that such accommodations are well within the scope of institutional capabilities, but they will require changes in planning and practices.